In the claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) ~~A cellular telephone network comprising~~The branch of claim 18, being one of peripheral branches of a telephone network, the peripheral branches being connected to ~~and~~ a central high-capacity data trunking region and, wherein said first synchronous protocol is the ~~using a~~ E1 protocol and wherein said second, synchronous protocol is the TCP/IP protocol, said high-capacity data trunking region comprises a satellite interface for a satellite connection using a TCP/IP protocol;, said satellite interface comprising said converter, said converter being an E1 – TCP/IP converter being operable to receive E1 signaling containing SS7 control signaling distributed therein at a predetermined data rate, said converter using a multiplexer for converting between the E1 signal and the TCP/IP signal;

wherein said high capacity trunking region comprises a terrestrial high capacity trunking connection in parallel with said satellite connection such that said satellite connection is usable to back up said terrestrial connection.

2, 3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Currently Amended) A cellular telephone network according to ~~claim 3~~ claim 1, wherein said high capacity data trunking region comprises a terrestrial high capacity trunking connection in parallel with said satellite connection such that said terrestrial high capacity trunking connection is usable to back up said satellite connection.

5 - 6.   (Canceled)

7.   (Original)   A cellular telephone network according to claim 1, wherein said satellite link is via geostationary orbit satellite.

8.   (Canceled)

9.   (Previously Presented)   A cellular telephone network according to claim 1, wherein said E1 – TCP/IP converter is operable to receive E1 signaling

containing SS7 control signaling distributed therein at a predetermined data rate, said converter comprising

an extractor for extracting said SS7 signaling, and

a TCP/IP packet former for arranging said extracted signaling into TCP/IP packets.

10.　(Previously Presented)　　A cellular telephone network according to claim 7, wherein said E1 − TCP/IP converter comprises an encoder for encoding synchronization control data describing said E1 signal into headers of TCP/IP packets, thereby to enable subsequent synchronous reconstruction of said E1 signal.

11.　(Original)　　A cellular telephone network according to claim 1, wherein at least one of said peripheral branches comprises a satellite link and an E1 − TCP/IP interface.

12.　(Currently Amended)　~~A branch of a cellular telephone network~~The branch of claim 18, wherein said first synchronous data protocol is ~~based on a~~the E1 protocol, the branches comprising interfaces to a satellite link, wherein the second, asynchronous protocol is ~~using an~~the TCP/IP protocol, wherein said converters at said interfaces comprise E1 − TCP/IP converters for converting data between said E1 protocol and said TCP/IP protocol, wherein said interfaces comprising encoders for encoding synchronization control information of said E1 protocol when encoding data of said E1 protocol into said TCP/IP protocol, thereby to enable reconstruction of a signal in said ~~first~~ E1 protocol from data in said TCP/IP protocol, which reconstructed data retains said synchronization, each one of said E1 − TCP/IP converters using a multiplexer for converting between the E1 signal and the TCP/IP signal.

13.　(Original)　　A branch according to claim 12, wherein said interfaces are arranged to provide said satellite link as a parallel path to a terrestrial data link.

14.　(Canceled)

15.　(Previously Presented)　　A branch according to claim 12 further comprising at least one base station connected to at least one mobile switching center,

said at least one mobile switching center being associated with at least one location register, and wherein said satellite link is arranged to connect said at least one mobile switching center with said at least one location register.

16. (Previously Presented) A branch according to claim 12 wherein said interfaces comprising decoders operable to decode synchronization control information from data arriving from said link, to reconstruct a synchronized telephony protocol data stream.

17. (Original) A branch according to claim 16, said interface further comprising a buffer controllable according to said decoded synchronization information to recreate time delay relationships of said telephony protocol data stream.

18. (Currently Amended) A branch of a cellular telephone network based on a first synchronous data communication protocol, comprising interfaces to a satellite link using a second, asynchronous, data communication protocol, wherein said interfaces comprise converters for converting data of a datastream between said first data communication protocol and said second data communication protocol, and wherein said telephony synchronous data protocol allowing allows non-data carrying time slots, and said interfaces comprising a non-data carrying time slot remover for removing said non-data carrying time slots during conversion into said asynchronous protocol and a time slot regenerator for regenerating non-data carrying time slots during reconstruction of said telephony protocol datastream.

19.-36. (Canceled)